

Message Text

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SUBJECT: ECHEVERRIA DISCUSSES GUERRILLA LEADER CABANAS

1. PRES. ECHEVERRIA, IN COURSE OF LENGTHY JULY 6 PRESS CONFERENCE FOR FOREIGN CORRESPONDENTS DEVOTED LARGELY TO INTERNATIONAL ISSUES (SEPTELS), TOUCHED BRIEFLY AND SOMEWHAT CONFUSINGLY ON SUBJECT OF GUERRILLA LEADER LUCIO CABANAS. NEITHER IN QUESTIONS NOR IN REPLIES WAS CABANAS'S CURRENT KIDNAP VICTIM, SEN. RUBEN FIGUEROA, MENTIONED BY NAME.

2. VISITING ARGENTINE NEWSPAPERMAN LED OFF BY ASKING WHAT ROLE A GUERRILLA OR AN INSURRECTION COULD HAVE IN A COUNTRY "STRUGGLING TO INCORPORATE RIGHTS AND GUARANTEES" INTO MODERN WORLD. ECHEVERRIA REPLIED RATHER DISJOINTEDLY THAT ACTIVITIES OF TYPE CARRIED OUT BY CABANAS PREVAIL THROUGHOUT THE CONTINENT AND "APPEAR TO ME TO BE PROVOKED FROM THE OUTSIDE, APPEAR TO ME (TO BE DESIGNED TO) PROVOKE REPRESSION; SOMETHING CONTRARY TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF DEMOCRATIC IDEAS. IT IS SOMETHING VERY SUSPICIOUS."

3. ASKED SPECIFICALLY FOR WHOM GUERRILLAS WERE WORKING, PRESIDENT SAID "FOR VERY DARK INTERESTS, THAT WANT LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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DEMOCRATIC PROCESSES OBIATED." HE CONTINUED THAT IN HIS

VIEW LIBERTY, FREE DISCUSSION AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT LEAD TO SOCIAL PROGRESS, WHEREAS "WITHOUT ANY IDEOLOGICAL THESIS, TO COMMIT MURDERS, ROBBERIES AND KIDNAPPINGS, PROFESSING SOMETHING PSEUDO-REVOLUTIONARY WITHOUT IDEOLOGICAL BASIS, BY PERSONS WHO HAVE-- AS WE KNOW-- NO DIALECTICAL CAPACITY, WELL, IT'S SOMETHING VERY SUSPICIOUS. IT APPEARS TO BE MORE THE WORK OF THE RIGHT THAN OF THE LEFT."

4. PRESSED ONCE MORE TO BE SPECIFIC AS TO THE "DARK INTERESTS" TO WHICH HE HAD REFERRED, ECHEVERRIA CONCLUDED THAT THE "INTERESTS" CONCERNED WERE ALL VERY OBSCURE, "AND WE ARE TRYING TO CLARIFY THEM; BUT IT CERTAINLY APPEARS TO ME THAT THEY ARE NOT REVOLUTIONARY (INTERESTS); RATHER, THEY ARE TRYING TO PROVOKE REGRESSIVE OR CONSERVATIVE TENDENCIES."

5. COMMENT: ECHEVERRIA'S REPLIES ON CABANAS APPEAR TO US NOT TO HAVE BEEN CAREFULLY THOUGHT OUT, AND HIS MUDDY SYNTAX HERE WAS IN MARKED CONTRAST TO HIS GENERALLY SMOOTH AND OFTEN WELL-DEVELOPED AND DETAILED REPLIES TO OTHER QUESTIONS TO WHICH HE HAS PRESUMABLY GIVEN MUCH MORE THOUGHT. SPECIFICALLY, TO BEST OF OUR KNOWLEDGE GOM HAS NO EVIDENCE THAT CABANAS IS LINKED TO ANY FOREIGN POWER OR INFLUENCE, ALTHOUGH IT MAY GIVE ECHEVERRIA SOME COMFORT SO TO SUSPECT. BASIC THEME OF HIS ANSWERS, HOWEVER, IS CHARACTERISTIC OF HIS AND OTHER GOM SPOKESMEN'S PREVIOUS TREATMENT OF THE GUERRILLA QUESTION AND IS PRODUCT OF LONG-ESTABLISHED MEXICAN "REVOLUTIONARY" TRADITION: NO ONE CAN BE TO THE LEFT OF THE PRI, SO ANY THREAT MUST THEREFORE COME FROM A "RIGHT" THAT -- BECAUSE IT CANNOT BE-- IS SELDOM IDENTIFIED SPECIFICALLY; AND, BY DEFINITION, NO POLITICAL ACTION CAN BE "REVOLUTIONARY" UNLESS UNDERTAKEN BY GOM/PRI.

6. ECHEVERRIA'S MURKY REMARKS ABOUT RIGHTIST FOREIGN DIRECTION OF DOMESTIC GUERRILLA ACTIVITIES UNFORTUNATELY COINCIDE WITH PUBLISHED ALLEGATIONS ABOUT CIA ACTIVITIES IN MEXICO. EXCELSIOR ON JUNE 7 FRONT-PAGED AN INTERVIEW BY WASHINGTON CORRESPONDENT RAFAEL RODRIGUEZ CASTANEDA WITH WILLIAM HIGGS, DIRECTOR OF "COMMITTEE FOR AN OPEN SOCIETY," LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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WHO IS QUOTED AS SAYING IN LETTER TO SEN. FULBRIGHT THAT CIA IS VERY ACTIVE IN MEXICO, WHERE IT CARRIES OUT SOME OF ITS PRINCIPAL OPERATIONS. "AMONG OTHER THINGS, (CIA) FINANCES SUBVERSIVE GROUPS, WHICH COULD EXPLAIN THE TERRORIST ACTIONS IN MONTERREY AND GUADALAJARA." ELSEWHERE IN LETTER OR INTERVIEW, HIGGS CALLS FOR END TO "INCREASING ILLEGAL ACTIVITIES OF CIA IN (MEXICO) AND OTHER LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRIES"; MOTIVATION, HE APPARENTLY BELIEVES, IS USG ATTEMPT TO APPLY PRESSURE,

ON BEHALF OF MULTINATIONALS, ON THOSE COUNTRIES TRYING TO OBTAIN HIGHER PRICES FOR PRIMARY PRODUCTS. INTERVIEW CONCLUDES WITH GENERALIZED ALLEGATIONS ABOUT US INTELLIGENCE BUDGETS AND ALLEGED LACK OF CONGRESSIONAL OVERSIGHT.

7. FURTHER, WASHINGTON POST AND WIRE-SERVICE COVERAGE OF ALLEGATIONS BY FORMER CIA EMPLOYEE PHILIP B.F. AGEE IS NOW RECEIVING PRESS PLAY HERE. ESTABLISHMENT-LEFTIST EL DIA, WHICH RELISHES STORIES OF THIS TYPE, USED AN EFE VERSION OF JULY 7 POST ARTICLE AS ITS LEAD STORY JULY 8 UNDER HEADLINE "ONE OF CIA'S OPERATIONAL BASES IN MEXICO WAS CLOSED." SAME PAPER FOLLOWS UP JULY 9 WITH AP STORY ON AGEE UNDER BANNER "CIA'S TASK: TO KEEP DOWN (MEDIATIZAR) LIBERATION MOVEMENTS." DISPATCH ATTRIBUTES TO AGEE STATEMENT THAT CIA AIM IS TO KEEP SUCH MOVEMENTS BELOW THRESHOLD AT WHICH US MILITARY INTERVENTION WOULD BE REQUIRED.

8. PARTICULARLY GIVEN ECHEVERRIA'S UNSUPPORTED REFERENCE TO EXTERNAL FORCES SUPPOSEDLY BEHIND CABANAS, WE BELIEVE HIGGS AND AGEE ALLEGATIONS MAY STIMULATE A ROUND OF ANTI-US ARTICLES BY EL DIA'S STABLE OF COLUMISTS AND BY KINDRED SPIRITS ELSEWHERE IN MEXICAN PRESS. THESE WRITERS NOT LIKELY TO BE TROUBLED BY CONFLICT BETWEEN ALLEGATIONS THAT USG IS BOTH FINANCING (HIGGS) AND SUPPRESSING (AGEE) SUBVERSIVE GROUPS.

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